

HONORING THE MINNESOTA RIVER
BASIN JOINT POWERS BOARD**HON. DAVID MINGE**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 26, 2000

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize five years of outstanding work by the Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board to coordinate the clean up of the thirty-seven county Minnesota River Basin.

Since its inception in 1995, the Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board has been able to build progressive and trustworthy relationships among agricultural production, conservation, sporting, and environmental interest groups. They have also been instrumental in building sustainable relationships with local, state, and federal government agencies in order to advance the cause of a restored, fishable, and swimmable Minnesota River.

The Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board has also been extremely helpful in promoting the Minnesota River Basin's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Minnesota River CREP hopes to retire and restore 100,000 acres of flood-prone farmland in order to improve water attributes in the Basin and the larger Mississippi River Basin as a whole. Furthermore, their ability to thoughtfully and even-handedly coordinate the needs of thirty-seven counties regarding watershed team tributary strategies has been important to the success of this basin-wide initiative.

I would also like to recognize this group's Executive Director, Steve Hansen, as a tireless and articulate advocate of water quality improvement and the State of Minnesota's continuing environmental commitment to its rivers and natural resources.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of the integrative and comprehensive watershed planning that the Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board is engaged in to promulgate and implement successful recovery of this important natural resource—the Minnesota River.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF AMBASSADOR
BIRABHONGSE KASEMSRI**HON. DANA ROHRBACHER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 26, 2000

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, this week, a long-time friend of the United States, Ambassador Birabhongse Kasemsri, known as Bira to his friends, passed away in his hometown of Bangkok, Thailand. I last saw Ambassador Kasemsri, 65, in 1999 during a visit I was honored to have with Thailand's King Bhumibol, whom Bira served as His Majesty's principal private secretary. In service to his King and country, Bira, was granted three decorations, including Knight Grand Cordon of the Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand [Highest Class].

Too often, American policymakers underestimate the importance of our strategic alliance with Thailand, which extends to our Civil War when the King offered President Lincoln a herd of fighting elephants from the Royal Thai military. Ambassador Kasemsri reinforced

the strategic relationship during the height of the post-Vietnam Cold War period, during his exemplary service as Thailand's ambassador to the United States. In addition, during the early 1980's while he served as Thailand's ambassador to the United Nations, Bira was a hero of the Reagan doctrine in Southeast Asia by protecting Thailand from communist aggression. During that time, Bira was instrumental in arranging for noted military historian and journalist Al Santoli—who currently serves as my foreign policy advisor—to visit areas of Thailand that were under attack by the Soviet-backed Vietnamese communist army and their surrogates from Cambodia and Laos. Thanks to the sponsorship of Ambassador Kasemsri, the articles that Al wrote for the New Republic and Parade magazines on the threat to Thailand directly contributed to the cessation of chemical warfare in Indochina and the withdrawal of the Vietnamese occupation forces in Cambodia.

On behalf of my wife Rhonda and I, and my colleagues who have had the pleasure of working with Ambassador Kasemsri over many years, I extend deepest sympathy to his wife, Rampiarpha and their three children. I believe that the seeds of solidarity that Bira sowed during his many years of representing The Royal Government of Thailand in America will lead to further development of the friendship between the governments and people of Thailand and the United States.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE
MACEDONIO A. PADILLA**HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 26, 2000

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, it is with particular sadness that I offer this memorial tribute to Mr. Macedonio A. Padilla of Pico Rivera, California, a politically active citizen of the 34th Congressional District. Mac Padilla served his community with an inspired passion for education, insisting on the importance of broadening the horizons of young minds.

Born in Los Angeles, California, on September 12, 1929, Mr. Padilla grew up with his family in the greater Los Angeles community. Having not completed his high school education, he enlisted in the United States Army and served his country in World War II.

He had two daughters, Sylvia and Margaret, with his first wife, Antolina Barba, whom he married in 1950 and divorced some years later. As a single man, he was employed at the Los Angeles Times and later at Farmer John's Meat Distributors.

In 1997, Mr. Padilla finally met the love of his life. He and his new wife, Lilian Aguilar, were fortunate to have her daughter from a previous marriage, Theresa, and were later blessed with Rosalie, their only daughter together. Mr. Padilla raised his four daughters, as well as his twelve grandchildren, teaching them that academic excellence was most important. Putting in much of his personal time and effort into his ideas, he was an assistant at South El Ranchito Elementary School. He loved to educate children. He was also a prominent voice with the local city officials and legislative members.

Even in his eventual health conditions, Mr. Padilla spoke his mind when it mattered most.

He made it his life-long goal to help improve his community to the best of his abilities.

Macedonio Padilla passed away on July 18, 2000. He is survived by his four children, their spouses, and his twelve grandchildren: His constant devotion to the members of his community, his family, and his country will forever be remembered.

Mr. Speaker, I extend our sincere sympathy to his family and ask God's comforting graces for them in their time of sorrow.

HONORING THE CLARK COUNTY,
ARKANSAS REUNION PICNIC**HON. DALE E. KILDEE**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 26, 2000

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, today I speak of a group of people who share a common history and a rich heritage. On July 29, my hometown of Flint, Michigan, will be the site of the Clark County, Arkansas Reunion Picnic.

Following the Civil War, many former slaves settled in an area of Clark County called "Okolona." They had endured slavery by developing and strengthening their bond with God, and with each other. Regularly, they would gather at Rome Spring Hill where they would sing, pray, and eat together as a community. They began to depend on each other as a family.

This tradition continued until the end of World War II, as many Americans moved from southern agricultural communities to the more industrialized cities of the North. Residents of Clark County often moved together in groups, allowing them to retain the bond they had established for so many years. In 1974, the tradition of the Clark County Reunion was resumed in the Northern states. This picnic has since become an annual event, held in five locations around the country, Clark County, AR, Chicago, IL, Seattle, WA, Los Angeles, CA, and Flint, MI. The last time the Reunion Picnic was held in Flint was 1995, and the Flint delegation was joined by over 500 members of their extended family, and they anticipate repeating this accomplishment, if not surpassing it.

Mr. Speaker, the Clark County Reunion Picnic serves many purposes. It provides an opportunity for family to come together, intensify old bonds, and forge new ones. It gives the younger members a chance to learn of their ancestry, and grow emotionally and spiritually. I am proud to know that Flint is a central point in their effort to maintain a strong sense of unity. I am pleased to ask my colleagues in the 106th Congress to join me in congratulating all the Reunion participants.

AZERBAIJAN'S PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTIONS**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 26, 2000

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce a resolution calling on the Government of Azerbaijan to hold free and fair parliamentary elections this November. After a